



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Issue 117 – July 17, 2006

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

Last Wednesday we ended an amazing Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort and I want to thank all of you who were able to join us. More than 500 people attended the conference this year, and it was great to network and learn about the latest industry news in the beautiful Tucson setting. We were honored to have Governor Janet Napolitano present the 2006 Governor's Tourism Awards to dedicated professionals across the state, with the help of some of the state's most energetic mascots! I also want to congratulate the recipients of the STARS awards during the STARS gala on Monday night, hosted by the Arizona Hospitality & Lodging Association and the Arizona Restaurant & Hospitality Association. As we reported at the conference, 2005 was an amazing year for tourism in Arizona, and I am thrilled to report that we have surpassed 2001 visitation numbers, with 2005 year-end numbers breaking records in visitation, spending and lodging sectors. One of the highlights of the conference was the unveiling of AOT's new Web site, which will provide visitors with information about what to do, where to go, what to see and what to know in Arizona. With the range of speakers and information during the three days of the conference, I know that we are all ready to begin this new phase of growth in our industry, and ready to step up our games to reach new heights.

I especially want to thank our conference partners, Debbie Johnson and the Arizona Hotel and Lodging Association, Steve Chucuri and the Arizona Restaurant and Hospitality Association and Karen Churchard and the Arizona Tourism Alliance for the exceptional work that was done on the conference.

I also want to encourage you to register to attend the 9th annual Arizona Showcase in Hermosillo this October. Hermosillo and the entire state of Sonora are extremely valuable markets for Arizona, and this premier event represents a unique opportunity to reach visitors in the area and spread the word about what the Grand Canyon State has to offer.

Have a great week.



Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Rural Tourism Development Grant Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2007

The Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for fiscal year 2007 are now available. The primary objective of the competitive grant program is to provide coordinated funding for tourism related infrastructure projects. The funding amount for FY 07 is \$697,000. AOT has added \$197,000 of unallocated TEAM grant funds. These funds assist rural economic development through tourism to strengthen the regional and local economies and expand tourism in rural and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. The primary function of the infrastructure project must be tourism development and the project must be designed to initiate economic growth and enhance future tourism development. Applications are available on AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov under the Grants section. Applications must be postmarked and/or hand-delivered to the Arizona Office of Tourism no later than 3 p.m. Friday, August, 18, 2006.

2006 Governor's Conference on Tourism Wrap-Up

The 2006 Governor's Conference on Tourism wrapped up last week at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson. More than 500 people attended the Governor's Conference this year. The event was a remarkable success, with opportunities for networking, a wide-range of informative breakout sessions and top-quality speakers. Robert Stevenson, President of *Seeking Excellence*, was a motivating keynote speaker on Tuesday morning, offering inspiration and wisdom about strategies and techniques to empower our industry towards a winning future.

In addition, eight industry leaders were recognized for their efforts during the Governor's Tourism Awards luncheon on Tuesday, in which Governor Napolitano congratulated the industry on stepping up its game with a record-breaking year in 2005. The winners for the

2006 Tourism Awards were:

Cooperative Marketing: Out and About Tempe Media FAM Tour, Tempe Convention and Visitors Bureau

Innovative Promotions: Fish Arizona!, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Special Events: (urban area) Cactus League, Cactus League Association; (rural area) Cowgirl Up! Art from the Other Half of the West, Desert Caballeros Western Museum

Arizona Preservation: Zane Grey Cabin Foundation

Spirit of Service: Richard and Sherry Mangum, Flagstaff Historic Walking Tours

Tourism Champion of the Year: Kathie Knapp, Arizona Department of Transportation Scenic Byways

Tourism Hall of Fame: Rachel Sacco, Scottsdale Convention and Visitors Bureau

On Monday night, the Arizona Hotel & Lodging Association (AzHLA) and the Arizona Restaurant & Hospitality Association (ARHA) gave awards to eight industry members during the annual Special Tribute And Recognition (STAR) Gala. For the AzHLA, the award recipients were:

AzHLA Hall of Fame: Renaissance Scottsdale Resort General Manager Richard Bibee

AzHLA Hotelier of the Year: Loews Ventana Canyon Resort Managing Director Brian Johnson

AzHLA Allied Member of the Year: Tracy Uffelman, Alliance Beverage Distributing Company

AzHLA Volunteer of the Year: Grace Inn Ahwatukee General Manager Jim Champlin

For ARHA, the winners were:

ARHA Hall of Fame: Daniel Jacob of El Pardor

ARHA Associate Member of the Year: Doug Yonko of Hensley

ARHA Rising Star of the Year: Jeff Flancer of Flancer's Café

ARHA Volunteer of the Year: Peggy Boyle of Padre Murphy's

Promoting - AZ - Advertising

Call for Entries: Arizona's Unique Experiences

AOT is now planning for the 2007 Official State Visitors Guide, which will be printed and released in early 2007. The OSVG is often the visitors' first glimpse into the amazing array of adventures in the Grand Canyon State, with information on where to stay, what to do and how to explore the state. This year a new section will be introduced featuring industry professionals who are committed to showcasing unique Arizona experiences to visitors. The section will feature one industry professional from each region of the state. Please send your suggestions to Traci Gomes at tgomes@azot.gov or call (602) 364-3705 for more information. The deadline for submittals is August 4, 2006.

Trippin' with AOT

Register Now for the 9th Annual Arizona Showcase in Hermosillo

The Arizona Office of Tourism will hold the 9th Annual Arizona Showcase October 4-5, 2006 in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. This event promotes fall and holiday shopping, attractions and accommodations throughout the State. This year there will be a special emphasis on family travel. On the first night of the event, a trade show for travel agents and media representatives will be coordinated. The second night of the event will highlight a charity fashion show with local models - specifically targeting high income families and individuals with a strong propensity to travel. The cost to participate varies from \$800 - \$2,000 depending on type of supplier and level of participation, plus travel expenses. Sponsorships are also available. The deadline to participate is September 1, 2006. Early booking discounts apply. Please contact Cathy Clifton at cclifton3@cox.net for more information.

Industry News

Airlines Adding Flights to Mexico

Lured by a growing tourist trade and hopes of generous profits, U.S. airlines are taking a new look at an old destination--Mexico. Full-fare operators such as Delta Air Lines and Alaska Airlines, as well as discounters such as Frontier Airlines and JetBlue, are thirsting for more flights to cities and towns south of the border. The destinations include resorts and business centers, and much of the service will originate from Southern California--particularly Los Angeles International Airport. Mexico has long been a popular market for both U.S. and Mexican carriers. The nation is by far the most common international destination from LAX, with almost twice as many passengers last year than No. 2 Canada. (www.LosAngelesTimes.com/Business)

TIA: International Visitors Key to Improving America's Image

Testifying before the State Department's Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy Wednesday, Roger Dow, president and CEO of the Travel Industry Association (TIA), encouraged commissioners to recognize travel and tourism as an untapped vehicle for improving America's image around the globe. "America's image abroad is in crisis right now," Dow said. "At the same time, we have an opportunity to reverse this trend--by welcoming more visitors to our great nation," he added. "By bringing more visitors to our country, we can share what makes our nation great--its people, energy and way of life. Making America the international destination of choice is good diplomatic policy," Dow advised the commission. The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy is a bipartisan panel created by Congress and appointed by the president to provide oversight of U.S. government activities intended to understand, inform and influence foreign publics. (Special to Travel Advance: www.ModernAgent.com)

Border Trade Alliance (BTA) Works to Secure Southern Border Governors' Support

As a result of the BTA's DC Congressional Briefing, the organization was asked by Office of Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm to secure the support of the Southern Border Governors in extending the implementation date of the WHTI. The BTA is currently working with the Offices of Texas Governor, Rick Perry; New Mexico Governor, Bill Richardson; Arizona Governor, Janet Napolitano; and California Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. (The Border Advocate, July 13)

Strategic Hotels & Resorts Announces Acquisition of The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess

Strategic Hotels & Resorts, Inc. announced that it has signed an agreement to acquire The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess for \$345 million, and an adjacent 10-acre development parcel for \$15 million. Fairmont will continue to manage the property subsequent to the closing of the acquisition. The 651-room destination resort is located on 65 acres in the high growth northern region of Scottsdale, Arizona. The hotel features 72 villas, 119 casitas, five restaurants, preferred access to the adjacent 36-hole Tournament Players Club Scottsdale golf course, 54,000 square feet of executive meetings space, and a 44,000 square foot Willow Stream spa. Laurence Geller, Chief Executive Officer of Strategic Hotels & Resorts, commented, "The Phoenix/Scottsdale region is one of the strongest lodging markets in the United States. The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess is located within this nexus of growth and enjoys a pre-eminent reputation within the area." For further information, please visit the company's Web site at <http://www.strategichotels.com/>.

WestJet Continues to Soar with More Flights from Canada to the United States

WestJet announced that it is enhancing its winter schedule with the introduction of new non-stop transborder flights and additional daily flights from Canada to the United States. WestJet will provide enhanced service to the U.S. from Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton,

Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Seats are available for sale immediately and can be booked online at westjet.com or through travel agents. Sean Durfy, WestJet's Executive Vice-President of Marketing, Sales and Airports, commented today: "WestJet is extremely pleased that our strategic plan of expanding into the U.S. is working so well. With these new enhancements to our schedule, almost one quarter of the capacity in our network will be going south of the border this winter. Our modern aircraft and award-winning customer service will further encourage Canadians travelling for both business and leisure to choose WestJet when booking flights." (www.westjet.com)

Arizona Cardinals Set Weekend to Tour New Stadium

Kickoff in Glendale is fast approaching and you have a chance to tour the new stadium. In less than a month the Arizona Cardinals will play their first game in the new stadium and the Arizona Tourism and Sports Authority will get the keys from Hunt Construction in about two weeks.

The public will be allowed to tour the stadium free on Aug. 19-20. The free tour tickets can be obtained at the Glendale Arena box office, the Cardinals ticket office in Tempe and at the stadium (after Aug. 1) and at www.ticketmaster.com. Tours will run from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. both days. As many as 60,000 people are expected to pass through per day. For more: www.azcardinals.com. (Phoenix Business Journal, www.bizjournals.com/phoenix)

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